

Message Text

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ACTION NEA-11

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 NEAE-00 AID-05 PC-01 MMO-01 A-01
ABF-01 PER-01 NSCE-00 SSO-00 SS-15 SP-02 L-03
H-01 CIAE-00 INR-10 NSAE-00 OMB-01 TRSE-00 INRE-00
EB-08 /062 W
-----059480 101305Z /64

O R 101130Z MAY 78

FM AMEMBASSY KABUL
TO SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 7931
INFO AMEMBASSY ISLAMABAD
AMEMBASSY TEHRAN

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STATE: FOR NEA: ASSISTANT SECRETARY SAUNDERS

AID: FOR AA/NE: WHEELER

E.O. 11652: GDS
TAGS: EAID, AF
SUBJECT: FUTURE OF US AID PROGRAMS IN AFGHANISTAN

REF: STATE 116319

1. SUMMARY: IN OUR VIEW, THE INSTRUCTIONS IN REFTEL CONCERNING
OUR AID PROGRAM IN AFGHANISTAN ARE TOO LIMITED AND TOO INFLEXIBLE
A STRATEGY FOR PURSUING OUR INTERESTS HERE.
ALLOWING "THE DUST TO SETTLE" BEFORE ESTABLISHING A DIALOGUE
ON AID MATTERS MAY FORECLOSE FUTURE OPTIONS WITH THE NEW REGIME.
WE RECOMMEND AN EARLY PROBING OF THE TARAKI GOVERNMENT'S
INTENTIONS AND PLANS. END SUMMARY

2. WE HAVE NOT YET BEEN ABLE TO DETERMINE WHETHER OR NOT
THE NEW AFGHAN GOVERNMENT INDEED QUALIFIES AS A "COMMUNIST"
REGIME IN THE CONTEXT OF SECTION 620 (F) OF THE "FOREIGN
ASSISTANCE ACT." THE TARAKI GOVERNMENT HAS REPEATEDLY
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REJECTED THAT LABEL -- AND, FOR THAT MATTER, HAS NOT YET
EVEN USED THE WORD "SOCIALIST" IN ANY OF ITS PUBLIC
ANNOUNCEMENTS OR CONVERSATIONS WITH US. THE MAJORITY
OF THE NEW REGIME'S LEADERSHIP INDEED POSSESS WHAT COULD
BE DESCRIBED AS A "COMMUNIST" PARTY BACKGROUND (ALTHOUGH
THE NAME "COMMUNIST" HAS NEVER BEEN USED BY ANY OF THE
AFGHAN LEFTIST PARTIES). THE NEW LEADERSHIP UNDENIABLY

CAME TO POWER THROUGH VIOLENCE AND BLOODSHED, BUT THEY
WOULD CLAIM THAT THAT WAS NECESSARY IN ORDER TO OVERTHROW
THE "TYRANNICAL DICTATORSHIP" OF DAOUD. WE BELIEVE THE
TRUE INTENTIONS AND POLICIES OF THE NEW GOVERNMENT MAY NOT
BE DISCERNIBLE FOR SOME TIME.

3. THE NEW GOVERNMENT HAS MADE IT CRYSTAL CLEAR PUBLICLY --
AND TO ME PERSONALLY -- THAT IT WANTS AID FROM ANY AND ALL
SOURCES, INCLUDING THE US, AND, IN THE NONALIGNED CONTEXT,
WILL BE JUDGING THE "FRIENDLINESS" OF FOREIGN NATIONS
IN THE LIGHT OF THEIR WILLINGNESS TO EXTEND ECONOMIC AID.
UNDER THESE CIRCUMSTANCES, WE SEE NO POLITICAL
ADVANTAGE TO OUR APPEARING TO BE UNDULY STANDOFFISH OR
NEGATIVE. SUCH A STANCE COULD IMPEL THE NEW AFGHAN REGIME
TO BECOME TOTALLY DEPENDENT ON -- AND ALIGNED WITH THE
USSR, A LA CUBA. BY WAITING TOO LONG, WE RISK CAUSING
THE TARAKI GOVERNMENT TO CONCLUDE IT IS DEVOID OF ECONOMIC
OPTIONS, OTHER THAN FULL RELIANCE ON MOSCOW AND ITS SATELLITES.
DEPUTY CHAIRMAN BABRAK MADE THIS PLAIN TO ME THIS MORNING.
A FEELING OF LACK OF ALTERNATIVES MIGHT BECOME STRONGER
HERE IN COMING WEEKS IF, AS IS POSSIBLE, AFGHANISTAN
IS DENIED FURTHER SAUDI ARABIAN, KUWAITI, OR IRANIAN
ASSISTANCE.

4. OTHER WESTERN DONORS WE HAVE CONSULTED, INCLUDING THE
CANADIANS (REF KABUL 3716), BRITISH, AND WEST GERMANS,
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PLAN TO CONTINUE THEIR ONGOING ASSISTANCE PROGRAMS
HERE. THE GERMANS HAVE TOLD US THAT THEY PLAN TO TEST
THE WATERS BY INDICATING A WILLINGNESS TO CONTINUE THEIR
PROJECTS, AND THEN WATCH THE CLIMATE UNDER ACTUAL

OPERATIONAL CONDITIONS. IF THEY SENSE AFGHAN OPPOSITION
OR MISDIRECTION, THEY PLAN TO PULL BACK. IF, ON THE
OTHER HAND, THE GERMANS AID TO THE NEW AFGHAN REGIME
IS RECEPTIVE, THEY ARE READY TO CONSIDER THE NEGOTIATION OF
NEW PROGRAMS. THERE IS APPARENTLY NO GERMAN LAW PROHIBITING
AID TO COMMUNIST COUNTRIES, ONLY A POLITICAL POLICY WHICH
BONN APPLIES SEPARATELY TO EACH SITUATION. FOR EXAMPLE,
THE GERMANS ASSIST "SOCIALIST" REGIMES IN AFRICA WHICH
COULD STRICTLY BE REGARDED AS "COMMUNIST," BUT BONN IN
SUCH CASES DOES NOT DISCERN A MEANINGFUL LINK TO MOSCOW.
IN THE CASE OF THE NEW AFGHAN REGIME, THE GERMAN EMBASSY
DOES NOT YET THINK THE TARAKI GOVERNMENT CAN BE ACCURATELY
DESCRIBED AS "COMMUNIST" OR LINKED TO MOSCOW THROUGH THE
"INTERNATIONAL COMMUNIST CONSPIRACY." WE UNDERSTAND THAT
THE UNDP AND THE WORLD BANK ARE ALSO PLANNING TO CONTINUE

THEIR ASSISTANCE OPERATIONS HERE.

5. WE BELIEVE WE SHOULD BE DOING SOMETHING SIMILAR TO THE GERMANS. ADOPTING A POLICY WHICH EXPLICITLY HOLDS UP NEW AID OBLIGATIONS, AND IMPLICITLY PUTS IN ABEYAMBE ANY MEANINGFUL DISCUSSION WITH THE NEW GOVERNMENT, WILL LIKELY BE INTERPRETED AS A NEGATIVE SIGNAL BY THE NEW REGIME.

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6. WE HAVE TWO PROJECTS WHERE A FREEZE ON NEW OBLIGATIONS WILL EFFECTIVELY HALT PROGRESS ON IMPLEMENTATION. WITHOUT NEW OBLIGATIONS FOR THE HELMAND PROJECT, WE WILL BE UNABLE TO FUND THE PHASE II DRAINAGE CONSTRUCTION. JUST BEFORE THE REVOLUTION, WE HAD SENT THE PREVIOUS GOVERNMENT A LETTER STATING THAT THE CONDITIONS PRECEDENT (CPS) WERE SATISFIED, AND THAT WE WERE READY TO SIGN A PROJECT AGREEMENT AMENDMENT WHICH WOULD OBLIGATE 3.2 MILLION DOLLARS FOR DRAIN CONSTRUCTION. A SIMILAR SITUATION EXISTS WITH THE INTEGRATED WHEAT PROJECT. IF THE NEW GOVERNMENT DECIDES TO ACCEPT THE MIAC CONTRACT PROPOSAL, WE WILL BE UNABLE TO FIELD A TEAM UNTIL ADDITIONAL FUNDS ARE OBLIGATED; AN OBLIGATION OF 1.86 MILLION DOLLARS WAS PLANNED THIS MONTH TO FUND THE PROJECT FOR ONE YEAR.

7. DISCUSSIONS WITH THE FORMER GOVERNMENT REGARDING OTHER PROJECTS HAD REACHED THE STAGE WHERE FAILURE TO MOVE AHEAD WITH THE NEW GOVERNMENT COULD SIGNIFICANTLY DISRUPT OUR MOMENTUM, WHICH WE MIGHT POSSIBLY NEVER REGAIN --

AND WOULD GIVE A NEGATIVE POLITICAL SIGNAL. PROJECT
PAPERS HAVE BEEN COMPILED FOR DEVELOPMENT SUPPORT
TRAINING (DST) PROJECT AND FOR THE TECHNICAL MANPOWER
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DEVELOPMENT PROJECT. (TMD) (THE DST PROJECT PROVIDES FUNDING
WHICH WILL BE REQUIRED DURING JUNE FOR EX-AUB PARTICIPANTS
IN THE US.) THE AMENDMENT TO THE BASIC HEALTH SERVICES
PROJECT WAS NEAR COMPLETION AT THE TIME OF THE REVOLUTION.
THE NEW MINISTER OF HEALTH HAS ALREADY INDICATED HIS
INTEREST IN MOVING AHEAD TO DISCUSS THIS EXPANDED PROJECT
(KABUL 3543). THE MINISTRY OF HIGHER EDUCATION HAS ALSO
EXPRESSED INTEREST IN RESUMING ITS DIALOGUE WITH AID
(KABUL 3732).

8. ALTHOUGH WE ARE NOT RECOMMENDING ANY SIGNING ACTION
AT THIS TIME, WE DO THINK IT WOULD BE HIGHLY USEFUL FOR
THE AMBASSADOR AND AID DIRECTOR, DURING OUR INITIAL
CALLS ON THE PLANNING AND OTHER RELEVANT MINISTERS, TO
BE ABLE TO PROBE AFGHAN THINKING RE THEIR DEVELOPMENT PLANS,
SPECIFICALLY IN THESE PRIORITY AREAS. WE WOULD ALSO WANT TO
BE CERTAIN THAT THE NEW GOVERNMENT UNDERSTANDS AND ACCEPTS
THEIR COMMITMENTS UNDER EXISTING PROJECT AGREEMENTS. SUCH
PROBINGS WOULD NOT IRRETRIEVABLY COMMIT US IN ADVANCE
TO HELP, BUT THEY WOULD IMPLY THAT IF WE GET AN
ACCEPTABLE RESPONSE FROM THE NEW GOVERNMENT, WE WOULD BE
PREPARED TO MOVE AHEAD QUICKLY ON THOSE FEW PROJECTS
WHICH ARE READY AND WHERE WE CAN REACH MUTUAL AGREEMENT
ON HOW TO PROCEED. WE WOULD ALSO BE EMPHASIZING THAT
AMERICA IS COMMITTED TO AIDING THE WORLD'S POOR, BUT THAT
OUR ABILITY TO DO SO IN AFGHANISTAN WILL DEPEND, IN LARGE
PART, ON ACTIONS BY THE NEW GOVERNMENT IN HUMAN RIGHTS,
AS WELL AS IN THEIR COMMITMENT TO ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL
DEVELOPMENT. IN THIS REGARD, WE SHOULD NOTE THAT THE
NEW GOVERNMENT HAS REPEATEDLY EMPHASIZED ITS COMMITMENT
TO PROVIDE "FOOD, CLOTHING, AND SHELTER" AND HAS BITTERLY
ATTACKED PREVIOUS GOVERNMENTS FOR FAILING TO HELP THE
POOR. FOREIGN MINISTER AMIN HAS ALSO TOLD ME THAT HIS
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GOVERNMENT WISHES PEACEFUL RELATIONS WITH ALL NATIONS IN
ORDER TO ALLOW IT TO ADDRESS ITS INTERNAL PROBLEMS. THUS,
IT MAY BE THAT THIS GOVERNMENT WILL PROVE MUCH MORE DYNAMIC
AND EFFECTIVE IN WORKING TO UPLIFT THE POOR MAJORITY THAN
DAOUD'S REGIME. TIME WILL OF COURSE TELL.

9. IN SHORT, WE BELIEVE THAT A PROBING ACTION ALONG THE ABOVE LINES IS NECESSARY AT THIS TIME IN ORDER TO PRESERVE AS MUCH AS POSSIBLE OF OUR AID BRIDGEHEAD HERE IN CASE WE DO INDEED REMAIN IN THE AFGHAN ASSISTANCE PICTURE. AND WE BELIEVE SUCH A POSTURE WILL KEEP OPEN OUR POLITICAL OPTIONS. WE SHOULD PROBE THE INTENTIONS OF THE NEW GOVERNMENT AND SHOW OUR WILLINGNESS TO MOVE AHEAD WITH ONGOING AID PROJECTS WHERE THE NEW GOVERNMENT WILL RECONFIRM ITS RESPONSIBILITIES UNDER THE PROJECT AGREEMENTS, AND TO INDICATE OUR WILLINGNESS TO CONTINUE THE DIALOGUE ON THE BASIC HEALTH SERVICES PROJECT AMENDMENT AND ON THE TMD AND DST PROJECT PAPERS. IF THE DEPARTMENT AND AID PERCEIVE NO OBJECTION, THIS FISHING EXPEDITION WILL BE LAUNCHED DURING MY AND THE USAID DIRECTOR'S INITIAL CALLS ON CABINET MINISTERS INVOLVED IN ECONOMIC AID PROGRAMS.

10. AS FOR THE FUTURE, WE STRONGLY HOPE THAT OUR GOALS IN AFGHANISTAN CAN CONTINUE TO BE SUPPORTED BY AN AID PROGRAM PERCEIVED BY THE NEW REGIME AS MEANINGFUL AND HELPFUL. WE SHOULD BE ABLE TO DETERMINE FAIRLY EARLY IN THE GAME WHETHER THIS WILL BE POSSIBLE.

11. REQUEST INSTRUCTIONS SOONEST. I AM ALREADY IN MY ROUND OF CALLS ON THE NEW MINISTERS, AS ARE ALL OTHER AMBASSADORS HERE, AND IT WILL BE NOTED IF I AVOID SEEING THE DEVELOPMENT MINISTERS.

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